

Flexible Work Practices Policy

Date: December 2023

1. Policy statement

To support the Audit Office achieving its vision 'Our insights inform and challenge government to improve outcomes for citizens' it is recognised that we must be agile in the way we work and our workforce management. Our Flexible Work Practices Policy and supporting working arrangements will assist us to achieve this.

The Audit Office is committed to supporting flexible work arrangements that help employees balance their work-life priorities. Our flexible work practices provide our employees with choice in the way they work, within the context of their roles, creating a diverse, skilled and motivated workforce capable of delivering quality products and efficient services.

Managers and employees are encouraged to openly and confidentially discuss flexibility needs and arrangements.

This policy and supporting documents provide guidance to employees and their managers on flexible work arrangements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and contractors directly employed by the Audit Office of New South Wales, except when otherwise stated. It includes fulltime, part-time, permanent, temporary employees and contractors.

The requirements of this policy may be waived or altered by the Auditor-General in the event of a pandemic or other major event outside the control of the Audit Office which leads to significant business disruption.

3. Definitions

In the context of this document:

- **Award** refers to the Crown Employees (Audit Office) Award as amended or replaced from time to time.
- The **Auditor-General** refers to the Auditor-General or anyone with the delegated authority of the Auditor-General.
- **Executive contract** refers to the employment contract of a person employed by the Audit Office as an executive officer under section 33F of the *Government Sector Audit Act (1983)*.

4. Legislation and related documents

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *NSW Carers Recognition Act 2010*
- *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*
- Audit Office Flexible Work Practices Model – August 2021

5. Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working ensures employees have access to flexibility across all roles, for any reason, enabling and better supporting them to have successful and engaging careers.

Flexible working arrangements can be ad-hoc, short-term or long-term and can include a range of informal and formal arrangements for when, where and how work can be completed. Formal working arrangements, such as individual flexibility agreements must be discussed with and approved before

they commence (refer to Clause 5.1 for more details). Once an employee has an approved work roster, they should work with their manager to determine the informal flexible work arrangements within that roster taking into consideration the Audit Office Flexible Work Practices Model (refer to Clause 5.2 for more details). This will help to ensure the needs of the employee and the Audit Office are considered and that flexibility arrangements are implemented in a sustainable way.

All employees can request flexibility arrangements as long as those arrangements enable them to complete the requirements of their role (arrangements may vary depending on the role).

Not all types of flexibility will be available for every role and every employee all the time (one size cannot fit all).

5.1 Individual flexibility agreements

In addition to our employee's right to adopt flexible work practices, employees can request individual flexibility agreements. This agreement requires written approval from your Assistant Auditor-General or Executive Director, must take into account business and operational requirements and must include the agreed period of the arrangement. Flexibility agreements will be reviewed on a regular basis as agreed between the employee and the approving manager. Agreements impacting rosters will be updated accordingly in the payroll system.

Contractors wishing to work flexibly under an individual flexibility agreement must seek agreement from the Audit Office and the recruitment agency.

Examples of individual flexibility agreements include:

5.1.1 Part-time work

For employees on the Award, part-time work means working less than 35 hours per week (for example, working three days/21 hours a week).

For employees on an Executive Contract, part-time work is having a proportion of a portfolio that is less than 100 per cent. The employee is responsible for completing the proportion of the portfolio of work as discussed and agreed with their Assistant Auditor-General or Executive Director.

Requests for part-time work may be subject to a three-month trial period.

5.1.2 Compressed working week or fortnight

Compressed working arrangements for those on the Award are working 35 hours in 4 days (average 8.75 hours per day) or 70 hours in 9 days (average 7.77 hours per day).

5.1.3 Term working for specific periods during the year

Employees working for a portion of the year and taking the rest of the year off. For example, working from March to November and having December to February off. Employees working under this arrangement may elect to receive a reduced fortnightly pay that is spread across the full year.

5.1.4 Job share

Where the responsibilities and pay of one role are shared between two or more employees.

5.1.5 Career break

Taking a period of leave without pay, up to 12 months, to pursue further studies, travel or other experiences.

5.2 Flexible work practices model

- Employees work with their manager to determine their flexible work arrangements within their approved roster by taking into consideration the Audit Office Flexible Work Practices Model and its foundational stones, principles, and guiding approaches.

- The Audit Office may adjust the Flexible Work Practices Model at any point, with consultation. Any changes to the model will be implemented with reasonable notice. Any disagreements related to the model can be escalated to the Deputy Auditor-General for decision.
- When determining flexible working arrangements, employees and managers need to consider the schedules and nature of work, and that of the Audit Office internal and external stakeholders, including auditees.
- Appropriate consideration is given to ensure we have a safe and effective working environment no matter where we are working.
- Flexible work should be considered in the context of the team, with all arrangements taking a team overview about how work will be distributed and solved for the needs of the team.
- Flexible work requires give and take between employee, manager, and teams – how we work balances the needs of our people, our teams, and our stakeholders.
- Flexible working arrangements may change and cease due to a number of reasons, including business and operational needs, changes to the foundation stones, and we need to respond to feedback and adapt to those changing requirements.
- Teams should prioritise outcomes in considering where or when the work is done, including considering whether a better outcome would be achieved with greater levels of collaboration.
- It is the obligation of the employee, their manager, and their team to make any flexible working arrangements a success.
- Flexible work arrangements should be reviewed regularly to check they are working.
- Where an employee and manager cannot agree on flexible work arrangements, they may refer the disagreement to the relevant director for resolution.

5.2.1 Flexible work hours

Employees can have flexible approaches to working hours that help to manage fluctuating workloads and work-life balance, provided:

- the hours they work are agreed with their managers, to ensure regular and effective interaction with colleagues, auditees and other stakeholders
- most ordinary hours of work are undertaken during business hours (AEST 8am to 6pm)
- the arrangements do not hinder the effective and efficient completion of work
- the employee attends meetings and training (including face-to-face and remote options) as required and/or necessary
- a meal break of at least 30 minutes is taken in every five-hour period of continuous work
- the employee is not required to work specific working hours to meet business needs.

If an employee requests and is approved to work on a weekend or a public holiday instead of in the usual work week, no additional compensation is payable. In these circumstances an employee would be compensated with time off during the week.

5.2.2 Work location

- As long as work, health and safety requirements are met, Audit Office employees can choose to work from our office, at an auditee site, at a residence or at another location in Australia. It is expected that when employees choose where to work, they factor in the nature of their role and balance the need for adequate interaction with the needs of colleagues, auditees and other stakeholders and the expectations laid out in the Flexible Work Practices Branch Guidelines and Team Commitments.
- People Managers and Leadership Team members will work with employees to identify times when in-person collaboration or engagement is required such as:
 - team building activities
 - individual or group coaching

- strategic, branch or team planning/workshops
 - induction of new employees
 - performance and development conversations
 - significant auditee or stakeholder meetings
 - auditing procedures (e.g. for a site inspection)
 - some training and development programs.
- Managers will provide employees with reasonable notice when requesting in person engagements.
 - Employees who are required to attend face-to-face meetings or activities, workshops or training sessions are required to cover the costs of getting to the office, auditee, other stakeholder or training sites (except for auditee visits covered by our [Travel and Other Expenses Policy](#)).
 - The work health and safety responsibilities of the Audit Office and its employees are the same regardless of whether employees work at the Audit Office head office, auditee site or another location. The need for a safe and ergonomic working environment to mitigate issues such as trip hazards, slippery floors, electrical safety, lighting and ventilation still apply.
 - When working remotely employees need to ensure that they have a suitable ergonomic set-up in line with our guidelines on [how to set up your desk ergonomically](#)
 - All employees and contractors must complete an annual Working From Home (WFH) checklist, that also needs to be completed within two months of moving to a new home environment. The checklist helps identify and manage potential work, health, safety and security risks.
 - When working remotely, it is the employee's responsibility to ensure they have access to a secure and stable internet connection that can sufficiently support day-to-day business activities. Where home and 4G connections cannot effectively support normal business activities, employees are expected to work at head office.
 - When working remotely, it is important to consider when it is more beneficial for your camera to be turned on in meetings to aid collaboration and build connections. Examples of when a camera should be on are meetings with external participants, training sessions or team meetings.
 - All employees must protect sensitive information from unauthorised access when working remotely. This includes physical sensitive information printed at home.
 - All employees must always comply with the [Information Security Policy](#), irrespective of the location of their work. This includes locking your computer when away from your workspace.
 - Working remotely is only practical when work can be completed without the distraction of caring for dependents, and should not be used as a substitute for sick or carers leave.
 - From time to time, it may be necessary for the Audit Office to have access to the home-based worksite to review safety arrangements or conduct incident investigations. Reasonable notice of this requirement will be provided, and employees must not unreasonably withhold consent if such a request is made.
 - All employees who work remotely are required to:
 - comply with Audit Office policies and procedures
 - be contactable by the Audit Office, their team members, their auditees and other stakeholders
 - notify their colleagues/ manager when they will be uncontactable for a period of time
 - share their calendars with managers and colleagues, and keep diaries updated to reflect when they will be unavailable throughout the work day
 - attend all face-to-face meetings or activities, workshops and training sessions as required and/or necessary.
 - Permanent and temporary employees on Audit Office payroll (with contracts over six months in length) will be provided the following support to set up a safe and ergonomic working environment at home:

- On commencement with the Audit Office, new employees will be provided a \$175 allowance to help set up their home office.
- Effective 1 October each year, employees will be provided a \$350 allowance through payroll to help set up their home office, paid in the relevant pay period.
- Effective 31 March 2022, the loaning of office chairs ceased, and employees can use their yearly allowance towards a chair if they wish. Chairs currently loaned to employees are considered property of the Audit Office and are included in our asset register. Chairs must be returned if employees leave the organisation prior to 1 April 2026. After this date, chairs do not need to be returned.
- This support will be reviewed as required.

5.3 Flex-time

- Flex-time will continue to exist as a useful way to adjust hours of work between busy and quieter periods.
- Flex-time only applies to employees employed under the Award and the rules set out in the Award must be followed.
- Accrued flex-time is not payable upon cessation of employment.

5.4 Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) for Executive Contract Employees

- Executive Contract employees have the option of using Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) as agreed with their manager, when they have met, or are on track to meet their objectives and productivity targets.
- Employees need to assess the length of time away from the Audit Office and availability when considering using FWA.
- FWA is for short-term periods (up to three days) where employees do not necessarily need to be present for work, however, will be available if required.
- FWA is not meant to replace other types of leave such as recreation or extended leave.
- FWA is not available to be taken when the Audit Office is closed (i.e. for the Christmas Closedown period). When the Office is closed, employees need to apply for recreational or extended leave.
- FWA does not require a leave application, however employees need to discuss their FWA with their manager prior to using it.
- FWA is recorded in Elite using the following details:
 - Matter number – 0001-00218
 - Matter name – Flexible working arrangements
 - Phase – FWA.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Auditor-General

The Auditor-General assumes ultimate ownership of this policy and either approves or delegates approval for any exceptional circumstances that fall outside the policy.

6.2 Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- embracing and advocating flexible work arrangements within their teams and branches
- setting expectations for their work group using the [Flexible Work Practices Toolkit](#)
- role modelling flexible work practices
- working with employees to manage flexible work hours and flex-time that suits the needs of the employee and the Audit Office
- reviewing requests for alternative working arrangements (e.g. part-time work, compressed working), assessing the feasibility of requests and informing employees within four weeks if the requests have been approved or declined
- consulting with People & Culture and Information Technology teams, if required
- confirming approval of agreed flexible/alternative working arrangements in writing, if necessary
- providing specific explanations for requests that have been declined
- discussing coordination or performance matters arising from the agreed work arrangements during the trial period and proposing alternative arrangements, if required.

6.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- discussing and agreeing flexible work arrangements with their managers as those arrangements enable them to complete the requirements of their role (what the arrangements look like may vary depending on the role).
- applying for changes to their current working arrangements and obtaining written approval individual flexibility agreements, such as part-time work or compressed working
- complying with Audit Office policies and procedures, including the Flexible Work Practice Model
- being contactable by the Audit Office, their team members and their auditees and other stakeholders
- notifying colleagues/ manager when they will be uncontactable for a period of time
- sharing their calendars with managers and colleagues and keeping their diaries updated to reflect when they will be unavailable throughout the work day
- attend all face-to-face meetings or activities, workshops and training sessions as required and/or necessary.
- completing the annual Working from Home (WFH) checklist, and if moving into a new home environment completed the checklist within two months
- ensuring they have access to a secure and stable internet connection that can sufficiently support day-to-day business activities, or work from head office if this is not available.

7. Contact point

If employees have questions about this policy, they should contact the Director, People & Culture.

8. Review

It is intended that this policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if significant new information, legislative or organisational change warrants an update to the policy.